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United for Quality Care

February 23, 2022

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District 1199 New England  
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Lynda Alder and I am a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) living in New Milford. I come before you today to ask that you properly fund home care services so PCAs like me can have livable wages and quality benefits.

I have been working as a PCA for three years. I love my job because I am a natural born caregiver. Most consumers are just people who want to live their lives but struggle because of things out of their control. Knowing I can step in with guidance, direction, laughter, smiles, some sweat and sometimes some tears to enable my client to live independently and have a better quality of life is amazing. Seeing "things" we take for granted every day (like putting on our shoes) while these individuals face those challenges eagerly with a smile as they try to be as normal as possible, puts an exclamation point on how important the services we offer are to this most vulnerable population. What we do is not a privilege for vulnerable people, it is a necessity.

Even though I love this work, it is challenging to work this hard for poverty wages. Many PCAs got into this work because we have big hearts and want to care for others, but we can barely take care of ourselves on these wages. We are literally turning into the most vulnerable population, oftentimes having to choose between food and medicine, housing and vehicle, shoes or clothes. It should not be like this! If healthcare workers are supposedly "heroes" for the work we do then why isn't the money that was earmarked for us being utilized to provide a living wage, health insurance, retirement program, disability insurance, paid sick leave and paid vacation?

With additional funding for home care services PCAs could have all of these. Living wages means not choosing between rent and food. Health insurance means we can seek medical treatment when we need it without risking financial ruin. Paid time off or sick leave means we can take days to care for ourselves without the danger of falling behind on our bills.

We are not asking for a lot! We are asking to be treated as the professional caregivers we are! It is time the state of Connecticut did what is right by PCAs and consumers we care for and properly fund home care services.

Thank you for your time.